

## School Reunion by OTTSTF

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**Relationships:** Eleven & Mike Wheeler, Eleven/Mike Wheeler

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**Summary:**

What if Max wasn't there to interrupt the reunion of Eleven and Mike?

This is my attempt at re-telling the story of Stranger Things 2 from that point up to the gate's closure.

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### [Chapter 1: School Reunion](#)

*"I never gave up on you. I called you, for-"*

*"Three-hundred and twenty-six days. I heard."*

### [Chapter 2: Desperate](#)

They thought seeing each-other would make things easier.

It turns out to be the exact opposite.

### [Chapter 3: The Gate](#)

El returns from Chicago to save her family.



# 1. Reunion

## Author's Note:

My first "what-if" canon-divergence story. I'm typically not a fan of stories that modify the existing story too much, but a conversation lead to this, and eventually lead to me thinking about it so much that I just *had* to write a fic about it. So I really hope you like this!

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Okay, this actually got pretty hard for me to write. I don't usually end up getting emotional over my own work but this... this got me. I hope it gets you, too.

Walking through the halls, El hears a voice in the distance. *Mike's*. The responses are quiet, crackled, telling her he's alone, talking to the others via a radio. Now is the perfect time. She speeds up, no time to waste.

Mike notices the door on the other side of the gym. It's swinging, as if someone (or something) just walked through it. He begins approaching, but is soon stopped in his tracks by what he sees. A girl emerges from behind the benches; hair a big bush around her face, but the face... he'd recognise that face from miles away.

They both simply stand there for a few seconds, shocked beyond belief that they're finally together again. She's alive, she found him. He's well, and still remembers her.

The silence is broken by their footsteps as they both remove the distance between them. Without a word, they're both embracing each-other, both squeezing tighter than what's probably healthy, but neither of them could care. They're here, they're holding each-other tight, *this is real*.

They remain silent for near the better half of a minute, before Mike breaks the silence.

"I never gave up on you. I called you, for-"

"Three-hundred and twenty-six days. I heard."

His jaw feels as if it's going to fall to the floor.

"Why didn't you come sooner?"

"I couldn't... it wasn't safe. It still might not be."

"Then what are you doing here?" he immediately fears for her safety, he's not selfish.

"You said you needed me, to know I was safe, so I needed to tell you."

A smile breaks onto his face. "Thank you." his face lands on her shoulder once again, her imitating it. A few more seconds pass before Mike's suddenly curious.

"So where have you been all this time? Are you safe?" He's got so many more questions, but he doesn't want to overwhelm her.

"Yes, *I'm* safe. I can't tell you *where* yet, we don't know when it'll be safe for you to know."

He sighs, but doesn't want to argue. Not *fully*, anyway.

"But, who's taking care of you? You're fed, you've got new clothes, so you're not alone, *thank god*."

She realises how obvious it actually is, and decides he can know *who* she's with.

"I'm with Hopper."

He gasps slightly, jaw dropping once again.

"Chief Hopper?" he feels anger build. "Why didn't he let me know? All this time, he could've told me!"

"He wanted to keep you safe, Mike. We both did. I've been begging so much but he's always said it'd be dangerous."

"Dangerous? I would never tell anyone! And I'm not selfish, if you need to stay in hiding, I can leave you until it's safe. I just needed to

know if you were alive, safe, and—" his tears overwhelm him, unable to speak any further. El's not usually the one doing the comforting, but right now, Mike needs her. She takes a hand to the back of his head, rubbing the other on his back. His face is buried into her shoulder once again, tears quickly soaking it. She directs him to the benches where they take a seat for a moment. It's probably really *stupid* to be staying here for this long, but she can't leave Mike like this. They need to end on a good note.

"I'll tell Hopper we spoke. He'll be mad but I don't care." she *really* doesn't care. This was worth it.

"We can talk through him."

**Sniffle** . "Like messages? I suppose it's better than nothing."

El nods her head in agreement. "I'll be watching, listening to you every night just like I have been. I promise, but..." she looks down to his SuperCom, tapping it. "...you don't need this."

He smiles through his tears, nodding his head. "I'll talk to you every night, El. I'll ask Hopper about you as much as I can, as long as it's safe. I promise."

She nods her head once again. She'd love to just stay here, holding him tight, but she can't. She can't be seen by anyone else.

"Mike... I need to go."

His face drops, and he seems to be about to retaliate, beg her to stay, but he knows she can't. He nods his head in defeat.

She steps up, and is about to go, before Mike jumps to his feet, grabbing her hand.

"Wait, El."

She looks to him, but says nothing.

"Thank you, for finding me."

She nods her head. They stare into each-other's eyes for a moment.

"Mike, I... I need to go."

"I know, El. I know." he tries his hardest to hold back his tears. He

doesn't want her to go; not knowing how long it'll be until they see each-other again, but he knows she needs to. It could be dangerous, someone could walk in on them any second now.

He lets his instincts take over. Raising both hands, he cups her cheeks, before connecting their lips in a desperate kiss. She gasps, shocked by the gesture, but accepts, eventually easing, returning the kiss. It lasts for a few seconds, before Mike breaks it.

"I'll miss you El, but thank you. Thank you so much for finding me." He's crying but smiling; finally content knowing she's alive, well, *safe*.

"I'll miss you too, Mike. Thank you, for still caring."

"Always, El. I'll always care."

A smile forms on her face, before she begins backing towards the door. Mike wants to grab at her arms and stop her from leaving, but he knows he can't. It'd be selfish, dangerous, *stupid*.

"Until next time, El."

She's not heard the term before, but she's sure she knows what he means.

"Until next time, Mike."

They give each-other a smile as she slowly backs through the door. They keep their glances on each-other for a moment. She doesn't want to go. Eventually she ducks her head and turns, walking, then running, down the corridor. The sooner she can get out of here, the better, else she'll want to turn back and keep Mike in a hug for the rest of her life.

He just stares at the door for a moment, feeling tears well up in his eyes. The urge to run after her too strong. He runs for the door, bursting through it. He looks around, but she's nowhere to be seen. *This is it*. The tears burst out. He returns to the benches in the gym, holding his face in his hands, elbows digging into his knees. He could remain here for hours, days, he's sure he'll never run out of tears.

He does remain there for a few minutes or so. The tears slowly begin

to wear off. He's seen her, he knows she's safe, she hasn't forgotten him, *she* found *him*. He's impressed that he manages to form a small smile; the knowledge that she is out there, and she can watch him, hear him, comforts him. At least now he can sleep at night, not having to worry about the girl that's saved his life twice.

He's broken from his thoughts as he hears Lucas's voice calling from the halls.

*Oh shit, D'Art.* He quickly wipes the remaining tears from his face, before standing up. He begins walking to the doors, trying his hardest to not think about El. He can't tell anyone she's been here, they'd spoken mere minutes ago. *He can't be selfish.*

He soon wishes El was still here once he sees the situation Will is in.

---

"Hey El." Mike speaks into the distance, sitting in the basement's fort. "If you're there, I just want to thank you, again. It means so much to me that you came to see me, and the thought that you could be watching me now is..." he thinks of the word. "It's truly amazing, El." he begins laughing slightly.

In the void, El imitates his smirk. She's sitting too close to him, but she knows he can't see her, which breaks her heart, but she can deal with it. They've seen each-other for real, he knows she's watching.

"I know you said I don't need this thing, but it just feels right. Now I know you're out there, the static... it kinda calms me now. I just wish I could hear you."

She nods her head, she wishes so too.

"You left just seconds too soon; Will gave us a real big scare out in the yard. His eyes were rolled back, and he was just standing there.

He wouldn't respond to us at all, but when he broke out of it he nearly collapsed to the floor. It... really scared us all."

She's shocked. She does wish she'd stayed for a little longer to try to help now.

"But, he's fine we think. Says he can't remember anything. I'm... honestly not sure if I believe him but I'm not going to pester him about it. He seems fine now, that's all that matters."

She's smiling slightly, comfortable that Will is fine, as far as they know.

He stares into the distance, unsure of what to say. A few seconds pass until he decides to end tonight's call-out.

"Thank you again, El. Now I know you're safe... I'll sleep a lot better. I hope now I won't need to go through any more nightmares, and maybe now I'll actually be able to put up with their bullshit without wanting to break their necks every five seconds." he laughs as he speaks, her copying him.

She reaches up to his cheek, the feeling of his skin cold against hers. There's no actual contact, but she feels *something*. He evidently does too, as he turns to look straight into her eyes. She gasps slightly, but he's none the wiser.

He feels his cheek grow cold, as if being touched by a ghost. *El...* He gets a gut instinct as to where she is, and looks into that direction. He can't be sure, but he *feels* that he's looking at her. He's not focused on what's in front of him; he looks into the distance, and he tries his best to imagine El in front of him.

A smile grows on his face. *She's here. She has to be.*  
"Good night, El."

Her smile grows nearly infinitely. *He can sense me.* The feeling warms her heart, happy tears slowly building.

"Good night, Mike."

He obviously can't hear her, but he nearly acts as if he can. He switches off the SuperCom and retracts its antenna, before standing



up, walking to the stairs. She watches him rise towards where his bedroom is. He disperses into a cloud as he leaves, prompting her to return to the real world. Hopper is with her.

“Well?” he asks her, even if the smile on her face makes it very obvious she’d seen him.

“He sensed me. He looked right at me.”

His smile grows. “Good, kid. Good. I promise I’ll do my best to let you see him for real again, okay? I *promise*.”

She nods her head. “Thank you.”

He ruffles her hair before standing from her bed. “Go on, kid. Get some sleep now.”

She nods her head again before laying down. He glances over her one last time, both giving each-other their smiles, before he closes her door. They had a small argument over her visiting him, but it didn’t last; neither of them got too angry, neither of them *wanted* to. This was a happy moment for the two, and Hopper too, if he must admit. If she’s happy, he’s happy. He’s confident Mike can keep his mouth shut; he’s the one that kept her safe for her first week out of the lab so he doesn’t doubt his trust for a second.

Maybe, just maybe, this could be the start of it. Happiness in El, and, ignoring the mother and kid that she bumped into, nobody else saw her. Maybe he could let Mike in on where the cabin is some day, as long as he swears to some ground-rules.

*Maybe.*

## 2. Desperate

### Summary for the Chapter:

They thought seeing each-other would make things easier.

It turns out to be the exact opposite.

### Notes for the Chapter:

Okay, the response to the first chapter was absolutely **insane!**

Thank you all so much! I love every single one of you!

“Hey El.”

Mike begins his nightly talk, seemingly to himself if anyone else were to observe him, but he knows that El is watching him. She promised.

“Today was just as boring as always, really. The guys are getting a bit suspicious. They say I suddenly became my old self one day after being a ‘moody ass’ for nearly the entire year... and I suppose they’re right, but they’re worrying me now. If they ever realise it was because of you... I don’t think I’d be able to lie. Whenever we talk about you, I feel like I want to burst out of my skin and find you again.”

He takes a breath, knowing full well he’s rambling, but he doesn’t plan on stopping.

“I’m-... I think I’m getting desperate, El. I thought seeing you that day would’ve made it easier to deal with; not seeing you. And yeah, knowing you’re out there, safe; it’s made life so much easier. But that knowledge makes it so much harder to know I can’t see you, because you’re all I can think about, all day every day. It sounds stupid, but-”

“*Not stupid.*” he hears El’s voice in his head, causing a small smile to form on his face.

“It sounds *desperate*, and it is. And I know it’s selfish of me but I really would love to know where you are... I’d do anything to see you again, even once. Our talk in the school was so short... There’s so

much we could've talked about but... we couldn't."

A single tear begins dropping from his right eye. In the void, El instinctively reaches to rub the tear away, but of course, she can't. It does cause a reaction from Mike, though, who, just like last time she'd *'touched'* him in the void, now looks her dead in the eyes. She has no idea how he knows where she is just from touch, but she loves it nonetheless.

Mike gasps as he feels his cheek grow rapidly cold, just like the first time he *felt* her; instinct pointing his eyes in the direction he believes El is again. A small, sad smile grows.

"Hello El."

She wishes she could respond; but instead lets out a breath she didn't know she was holding. Mike continues.

"I'm-... sorry, for sounding so desperate. But really, it's getting so hard now, I... this *does* sound stupid but I don't think I can go on like this. I *need* to see you again; I *need* to know where you are. You know I'd keep it a secret from everyone else, but I know it's not your choice either..."

They both sigh in unison. El feels the need to see Mike for real too, and she'd love for him to know where she is.

"I'm going to go see Hopper tomorrow. I doubt he'll give in, but I'm ready to full on beg. I'd scrub clean the entire station if it meant I could see you again." he smirks slightly, and she giggles, nodding her head; she'd do exactly the same.

"Well, it's getting late. Sorry again, for sounding so hopelessly desperate, but that's what I am now, El." he lets out one last sigh. "Good night, El." he gives her a sad smile, her echoing it, before he retracts the SuperCom antenna and stands from the fort, vanishing into a cloud of smoke.

In the cabin, on her bed, El removes her blindfold, telekinetically switches the TV off, before smashing her back into the bed, feeling tears build in her eyes. She feels stupidly desperate too; feeling exactly the same as Mike. Seeing him that day had made things easier

at first, but now, knowing how desperate he is, and knowing he would be able to keep her location secret for as long as he needed to, she feels as if she won't be able to last like this either. She decides she will talk to Hopper in the morning, too. Maybe a talk from them both will push him a bit.

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The sound of Hopper preparing breakfast wakes El from her struggled sleep. Sleeps aren't nearly as bad since she'd seen Mike, but they're becoming harder each day, knowing Mike feels the same as her. She walks out of her room, approaching the dining table. Hopper turns his gaze to her, before setting down their breakfasts.

He traces the TV's power cord with his gaze, leading from the wall to her room.

"You visited him again, last night?"

She gives him her trademark half-smile.

"Says it's getting harder. He wants to know where we are."

He sighs. "You know he can't know, kid. It's dangerous."

"But Mike would never tell anyone else! He can keep a secret!" El begins shouting.

"I don't care, kid! If he's followed, if anyone else finds out, it'd be game over for us. There's nowhere else we can hide if this place gets found out!"

"Mike. Isn't. Dumb." she states seriously. Anger rapidly builds inside her.

"Kid, we're not telling him. Not until it's safe. You saw him recently anyway."

"Nearly three weeks ago! Too long!"

"You managed most of the year, kid! Three weeks is nothing!"

“When can I see him?”

He hesitates. “I... don’t know.”

“Day one-hundred?”

“I-”

“Day two hundred?”

“I don’t know.”

“Day three-hundred?”

“Kid, I don’t know!”

“I *need* to see him!”

With a flick of her head, her plate smashes into his chest.

He lunges from his seat. “Jesus!”

“Friends. Don’t. Lie!”

With that, she storms into her bedroom again, telekinetically slamming the door behind her.

“Kid...”

No response.

“Kid, open up, please.”

He waits a moment.

“All right, you know what? You’ve pushed it. You’re grounded. You know what that means? No eggos...” he begins emptying the fridge of eggos, tossing the boxes into a bin. Her door opens.

“And no TV. For a week.”

He attempts to lift the TV, but it’s locked to the floor. Turning his gaze to El, he sees blood slowly emerging from her left nostril.

“All right, knock it off.” She shakes her head.

“A month!” another attempt to lift the TV gets him nowhere.

“All right, you’ve graduated from no TV for a month, to no TV at all!”

He yanks the cord from the wall, unintentionally breaking the plug, but he pays no notice. He can fix it once things calm down between them.

“NO!” she shouts, running to the TV.

“You’ve got to understand me, kid! I do everything to protect you, and all you do is complain! I get you want to see Mike, but you can’t, okay? Not until we know things are safe.”

“*WHEN* is safe?”

“Kid, I don’t know!”

She groans. “You, are like Papa!”

“Oh, I’m like that crazy son of a bitch? I don’t think so.” he laughs at her claim.

“I’ve done nothing but protect you, feed you, give you a home.”

“You keep me trapped! Locked in here just like Papa did. I hate you!” Tears begin to form from her face as her anger shows no signs of calming.

“Yeah, you know what? I’m not crazy about you, either, ‘cause you know what? You’re a brat. How’s about that be your word for the day, huh? B, R, A, T, look it up.” he tosses a dictionary in her direction softly, to see it freeze in mid-air as she holds a hand up. He steps back slightly; it’s been a while since she’s used her powers for anything but a door slam.

With a push of her hand, the dictionary flies into him. “Hey!” he steps forward, to be stopped by the sofa nearly knocking him over as she flicks her hand. She storms back into her bedroom, flicking her hand at the bookshelf, causing it to fall to the floor. With another wave of her hand, the door slams behind her, shaking the entire cabin on its’ boundaries.

“Kid, get out here.” he walks to her door, receiving no response.

“You wanna go out in the world? Then grow up! Grow, up!” he begins shouting at the door. A scream louder than what should be possible emerges from El, until every window of the cabin smashes inward. He looks around, taking in the damage. *Holy shit*, is all he can repeatedly hear in his own mind. Sobs emerge from the door.

Approaching the door, Hopper feels the urge to try calming her

down.

“Kid, I...” he trails off, realising he can’t let her get away with destroying their home every time they argue. “I want this cleaned up by the time I get home, okay?” No response, but he walks to the door, taking his coat and hat, before leaving.

---

“Hey, Hop.” Flo greets Hopper as he walks into the station.

“Hey.” he less-than-half-heartedly responds, leading Flo to know something’s gotten on his bad side, but knows better than to pester the chief. He goes straight into his office, slamming onto the chair, immediately lighting a cigarette and taking a large drag.

He begins looking through old papers, before a knock emerges on the door, startling him slightly. With a sigh, he signals whoever awaits on the other side to enter. It’s Flo.

“Hey Hop. I see you’ve had a less-than-great day, but you’ve got a visitor.” she informs him.

“Michael Wheeler.”

*Of course. Of. Bloody course.*

With a groan, he responds. “Let him in.”

She turns from the door, returning to her desk. Soon after, Mike is in his office, closing the door behind him.

“Don’t bother, kid, she’s already begged me and destroyed the cabin this morning.”

Mike’s eyebrows raise at his statement.

“W-what for?”

He laughs slightly. “What do you think? She was watching you last night, she feels the same way you do.” Mike can’t help but feel himself heat up slightly, knowing El feels the same way for him that he does her. “But you can’t know where we are, kid. It’s too

dangerous.”

He sighs. “Sir, I’ll be careful! I’ll keep my mouth shut, no matter what. They could torture me for information, they’d never get it.”

“I trust your word, kid.” he admits.

“Then why can’t I know?”

“What if you’re followed? Those people are aware you know each-other. I wouldn’t be surprised if they’re still watching your every move.”

Mike ducks his head, knowing he’s right. There’s no point arguing against this.

“I’m sorry, kid. I really am. But until we know that it’s absolutely safe, that nobody’s watching, it’s not worth the risk. You understand, don’t you?”

He nods his head. “I understand.”

“Thank you. Listen, as soon as it’s safe, you’ll be the first to know after her, okay? I promise you that.”

He smirks slightly, his sadness clearly visible through it, but nods his head. Hopper returns the smallest smile. “Go on, kid. Get out’a here.”

Mike turns to the door, walking through it, trying his hardest to hold in tears of both sadness and anger. Sadness, not knowing how long it’ll be until she’s free. Anger, not towards Hopper, but towards the lab. Why won’t they just leave her alone? They kept her locked up for the first twelve years of her life; and now she has to continue being locked up with Hopper because they could still be looking.

*Assholes. That’s all they are.*

---

After realising there’s no chance of her fixing the TV herself, she



hesitantly begins cleaning the cabin as best she can. She telekinetically lifts the bookshelf before placing items back onto it. She then begins sweeping the floor, before coming across an odd indentation. With a flick of her head, the sofa is out of her way.

Lifting the trap door, she lowers herself into the floor's storage compartment. Looking around, a box labelled "Hawkins Power and Light" immediately catches her attention. Bringing it up, she begins looking through the box.

"Ives. Terry." she reads the words on the front of a document, before opening it to see a picture.

"Papa..." she names the man. Her attention turns to a woman that he stands with.

*Mama?* She wonders to herself.

Remembering the TV is broken, she retrieves the portable radio from the bookshelf before finding static on there. Placing the blindfold over her eyes, she focuses on the woman in the picture, holding it to her heart.

She finds her, swaying back and forth in a rocking chair; she begins approaching her.

"Mama?"

Terry's focus snaps to her. "Jane."

El attempts to place a hand on hers, but she disperses into a cloud of smoke.

"Mama?" she calls out, looking around.

"Mama?" she begins shouting.

Eventually pulling the blindfold off, she's crying once again. Curling into herself, she comes to a decision.

*I will find you, Mama. I promise.*

## **Notes for the Chapter:**

So this chapter was essentially to settle the idea that she does still visit Terry and then Kali. The next chapter will likely be following the entry of demo-

dogs in the lab.

The events of El's visit to Terry and Kali will remain unmodified from the show.

As always, thanks for reading!

### 3. The Gate

#### Summary for the Chapter:

El returns from Chicago to save her family.

#### Notes for the Chapter:

This one is all over the place, but I couldn't think of any other way to do this one.

I hope you can still enjoy it!

“IT’S A TRAP! LET ME THROUGH, I NEED TO TELL THEM. IT’S A TRAP!”

Mike desperately tries to pass the guards at the door after realising Will isn’t himself any more. He freezes in place as the alarms of the building wail, signalling the death of many.

“It’s too late...”

---

“I need to go. My friends are in serious trouble. If I don’t go...” El stalls, not wanting to think of the consequences.

“Jane, they can’t save you.” Kali tries to encourage El to stay with them, desperately trying to keep focus on the wall she’s formed in the minds of their pursuers.

“No... but I can save them.” With that said, El turns away and breaks for an alleyway.

“Jane!” Kali immediately loses focus on her mental wall as she watches her lab sister leave them for good.

“Jane!” she tries many times, feeling desperate. Only two days ago, she finally felt complete after meeting El. And now she watches her leave, once again leaving her feeling like a piece of her has been taken.

The van's door is closed as it begins to move. Despite the bullets hitting their van, all Kali can think of is El. Her mind rushes through the limited memories she has of her, and what could have been. They could've been great together; they could've rid the world of the disgusting pigs that had tortured them all their lives, and after that, they could've been a normal, albeit quite dysfunctional family. But all that had just been crushed as she constantly sees the images of her lab sister turning away and running. She the blood from her nose, although, as much as she hates to admit it, she's sure she'll soon be wiping her eyes instead.

---

"I'm going to see my friends." El speaks to the woman who moved close to her, feeling an odd comfort from her.

"I'm going home." A smile forms on her mouth as she names not the *place*, but the *people* her home. Hopper. *Mike*.

---

In the Byers' home, Mike takes a moment away from the action to sit alone.

"El, if you can hear me, *please*, we need you. All hell is breaking loose and..." he struggles, but continues. "I don't think we'll make it without you." He looks around, seeing the mess that is drawings of vines cover the walls. He suddenly feels his cheek grow cold, which as always causes his head instinctively snaps to look in a certain direction. A smile grows on his face, now knowing that El is watching.

"Please hurry, El."

---

"I'm coming, Mike. *I promise.*"

El speaks pointlessly to Mike in the void. She lifts the blindfold from her eyes, rubs the blood from her nose and immediately sets course for the Byers' household. Howls emerge in the distance; El acknowledges that this won't be a clean journey in the slightest. *Please, no Demogorgons*, she hopes to herself.

---

Mike approaches Hopper as the gang prepares for the worst.

"She's coming." he says, confusing the man.

"What?" he asks simply.

"El. I felt her, I told her we need her."

"You- you what?" He's both confused and somewhat angered. *Felt her? The hell does he mean?* Considering the circumstance, though, he does kinda hope she is coming to save their asses, *again*. *Why can't she be at peace, for a single goddamn year?*

He sighs. "God I hope you're right, kid."

Mike goes to speak, but is interrupted by the sound of howls getting near to the house. They break for the living room, Hopper and Nancy immediately grabbing their rifles; the rest of the gang grabbing whatever they can find.

The howls continue, but other sounds, still from demo-dogs, emerge. They sound like cries, which confuses Mike slightly, but the others don't seem to notice, at least from their expressions.

Silence surrounds them, not helping the tension in the slightest. Suddenly, a demo-dog bursts through the window, causing mass panic amongst the crowd. The beast is limp, seemingly dead, causing confusion in everyone, but one.

El? Mike hopes for the best, not knowing how else to explain a dead demo-dog bursting through the window. The lock on the door begins to slide, startling everyone.

*Please be El, please be El, please be El.*

The door opens, revealing a vastly different El from the one Mike saw three weeks ago. How has she changed so much so suddenly? Where did this look come from? His thoughts run at many miles per hour for a second or so, before he's overwhelmed by the fact that *she's there*, standing in front of him, entering the house like the superhero she is.

Mike is walking to her before he even realises it. Instinctively, he's immediately hugging her tight; her returning the gesture. They embrace each-other in silence for a few seconds whilst the rest of the group simply stares in awe at the scene.

"I knew you'd come." Mike tells El as he lifts his chin from her shoulder.

"I've felt you listening, every single time."

She nods her head, raising her hand. Placing her hand on his cheek, exactly as she has done in the void every night, they both let out breaths of pleasure in unison; the sensation of a real touch much more fulfilling than the ghostly feel of the void. Mike's smile grows as he realises that this touch is what he's been feeling every night; El's smile imitates his immediately.

"Of course I'd come. You needed me."

Mike drops his head to her shoulder again, still overwhelmed by the fact that she's in his arms.

"All-right, where have you been?" Hopper's voice emerges from the crowd.

"What's..." he waves his hand in a scanning fashion, indicating to El. "...this? This whole punk look?"

She shakes her head. "Later. Not important."

"Not important? El, what did we talk abo-"

Mike turns his head, and cuts Hopper off. "Hey, let off! She obviously

got fed up of being locked up, how she's here to save us, *again*. " his voice raises in volume as he emphasises '*again*'. "I'm not going to let you give her shit moments before she goes to save our lives at her own risk."

Everyone's shocked at the sudden outburst from Mike; the target not helping their shock.

Stunned, Hopper opens his mouth to speak. "Kid-" only to be interrupted again.

"Don't '*kid*' me, all-right? How about you put yourself in her shoes for two seconds? Imagine being locked up, treated like a lab rat for your entire life, to then break out, find friends, only to have to save their asses by sacrificing yourself."

"Mike-"

"And then come back, but not be able to speak to any of the friends you found. Imagine how it must've felt. How would you act in her shoes, huh? Think about that for two god-damn seconds before you start giving her shit."

El pulls on his shoulder, causing him to immediately turn to her and observe her shocked expression. The adrenaline rush comes to a halt, and the flood gates open. Mike's face drops into her shoulder once again, tears soaking it effortlessly. Instinctively, El begins rubbing his back in an attempt to comfort him; one of her hands raise to the back of his head.

"Mike, it's okay, I'm here. I'm going to fix this, and then I'm coming straight back for you. We'll never be apart again." she tries hard to hold back her own tears.

Hopper approaches them both, earning an emotionless glance from El. Ignoring her stare, he wraps them both in his arms. Mike looks up to him for a moment, expression all over the place, before his face drops into her shoulder once more.

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“Please be careful, El. I can’t lose you again.” Mike essentially begs, knowing that, were El to disappear again, it’d push him over the edge.

“You won’t lose me, Mike.” El confirms.

“Promise?”

“Promise.”

Instinctively, they both begin leaning in towards each-other, until their lips connect. They both feel as if they’re lifting from the ground as they linger; the kiss feeling desperate for both parties.

“All-right, come on, that’s enough.” Hopper calls from his truck after rolling his eyes. Their kiss breaks; they stare into each-other’s eyes; both feeling that the kiss ended far too soon. Hesitantly, El slowly breaks out of Mike’s grasp, heading towards the car.

Mike watches as the car drives away, and can’t help but feel he should be with her. He doesn’t care that it’d be stupidly dangerous; El’s going to save their life, the least he could do is help. Thankfully, at least to him, they end up in the tunnels and help immensely as they engulf the ‘hub’ of vines in flames.

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The gang await eagerly for the return of Will and El. Secretly, Mike is hoping that El will be the first to arrive. As much as he cares for Will, the need to know that El is okay after closing the gate is overwhelming for him.

It feels like centuries pass before they hear the rumbles of an engine. Mike springs to his feet, swinging the door open and breaking onto the porch. He sees a car emerge, and his heart drops as he realises it’s not Hopper’s truck. Swallowing the feeling, not wanting to seem like an asshole, he runs to the car to check on his friend.



“Is he okay?” he immediately blurts out to the car’s occupants.

“Yeah, he’s fine. Just getting some sleep.” Nancy responds to her brother. A sigh of relief emerges from Mike as they carefully lift Will from the car. He begins walking to the house, the desperation for El’s return creeping back up rapidly. Will is taken to his room, laid on the bed as he remains in deep sleep. Joyce remains with Will as Nancy and Jonathan leave, closing the door carefully behind them.

A minute passes, feeling like another decade, before another vehicle begins to emerge. Mike darts for the door once again, remaining on the porch. The vehicle comes to a stop, and Hopper climbs out of the driver seat, approaching the back door. Mike feels physically unable to move as he watches Hopper reach in. As he pulls El out, Mike goes into overdrive, running up to them.

“No, no no no no NO!” he fears the worst as he observes her hand hanging down.

“Calm down, Wheeler. she’s-”

“Mike?”

Hopper groans slightly. “She was sleeping.”

“Shit, sorry El.”

“No, not sorry.” she reaches for his hand, Mike breaks a smile immediately. He and Hopper walk back into the house, heading straight for Jonathan’s bed. Mike pulls the bed sheet back, allowing Hopper to lower her. Mike immediately tucks her in, wearing a smile as he does; his gaze not leaving hers. Noticing the mess of blood and make-up on her face, Mike’s about to tell Hopper to retrieve a rag, but he’s already one step ahead. He passes it to Mike, looking unsure.

Mike turns back to El. “Let’s get you cleaned up a bit, yeah?”

She nods her head, and Mike begins wiping her face, beginning with the streaks of blood from her nose and ears. Smudges of make-up remain s, so Hopper takes the rag to rinse it before returning. After some more cleaning, she’s clear of blood, and mostly clear of make-up.

“Thank you.” she says lightly to Mike.

“No problem, El.” he returns with his typical soft smile.

“Get some sleep, kid.” Hopper says to El, who nods her head. He and Mike begin walking to the door.

“Mike?”

They both turn to look at her. She’s holding up the bed sheets, signalling for him to join her.

“Uh, no, kid.” Hopper says to her.

“You need sleep, El. I’ll be just out here.” Mike states.

“Please, I don’t want to be alone.” she states, sounding desperate. Mike’s heart drops, and Hopper lets out a large sigh, running a hand over his face.

“Fine. Just this once, you understand?” he gives in, realising someone probably should keep an eye on her. It just *had* to be Wheeler, didn’t it?

“S-Sir, are you... sure?” Mike’s clearly stunned.

“Honestly, no I’m not. You’re too young to be *this* attached to each-other.” Hopper resists the urge to cringe at the thought. “But after what you’ve been through together, I suppose it makes sense.” he admits. With a sigh, and another rub of his face, he nudges Mike towards the bed lightly.

“There’s no point me arguing any more.”

The smile on El’s face grows immensely, whilst Mike feels like he’s going to cook alive. He carefully climbs into the bed next to her, keeping his distance. Hopper gives a single nod of his head to Mike, as if to reassure him he’s done good by keeping his distance.

“Good night, kid... Mike.” he truly can’t believe he’s letting them sleep together, but under the circumstances, he supposes she does deserve a bit of peace; and as inappropriate as this would seem to anyone else, he’s sure he can trust Michael Wheeler, especially after

his little rant earlier. With that, he leaves the room, gently closing the door behind him. Turning around, he finds multiple faces staring him down.

“You’re... letting them sleep together?” Dustin seems to question the chief’s sanity, a bit too loud.

“Kid, shut it. I can’t believe I’ve given in to her demands either, but after everything they’ve both been through, there’s no point fighting it any more. It’s been a lost battle for a while now.”

Dustin looks to Lucas, both smirking, failing to hold back small snorts of laughter.

“Hey! Listen, any other time, go ahead and torment them. But right now, give them some peace, yeah? Mike was right earlier, she’s done nothing but sacrifice herself every time this shit’s gone down, so right now, it’s the least I can do for her.”

They’re both looking somewhat guilty.

“Normally this door would be wide open under the circumstances, but this reaction is the exact reason I’m closing it. I can’t have your immaturity waking her up every five seconds. Do you understand?”

They nod their heads.

“Good. Now get some sleep, all of you. We’ve got a lot of work set out for us tomorrow.”

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“Thank you, Mike.” El breaks the silence shortly after Hopper closes their door.

“W-what for?”

“For sleeping with me.” she answers, saying it as if it’s nothing. Mike’s sure the bed will combust any second now.

“Y-Yeah, El. N-Not a problem.”

She notices his stuttering. “What’s wrong?”

He immediately breaks free from his shy feelings. “Nothing! Nothing’s wrong, it’s just... I... I’ve never even thought about sleeping with a girl.”

El realises what he means. Rolling onto her side, she reaches a hand over Mike and nudges him to move closer. He hesitantly rolls onto his side, facing her. Their eyes lock into a stare.

“It’s okay, Mike. Don’t be uncomfortable.”

A smile breaks onto his face, always taken back by her innocence. She’s right, it’s only El. No need to feel uncomfortable, surely.

He thought. She leans in and places a quick kiss to his cheek. If Mike wasn’t hot before, he definitely is now.

“Good night, Mike.” she says, as if completely unfazed by the fact she just kissed him, no matter how quick.

Swallowing the discomfort, Mike smiles back to her. “Good night, El.”

By the morning, they’re completely wrapped in each-other’s embrace. Hopper’s sure the alarms in his head can be heard from miles away, but manages to hold himself back. They look so god-damn peaceful, and he’s sure she’s never slept this well ever since he’d found her.

*Let them be. They may love each-other, but for now, it’s innocent, and, actually, quite beautiful. Let them keep their innocence whilst they can.*

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Well there we go! I never could've imagined the overwhelming response this story got from the first chapter, for which I have to thank you all *so much!*

Please do drop your feedback if you have time. This

was definitely quite the journey from me, from start to end. Thank you so much for joining me through it!

**Author's Note:**

Please give your opinions on this if you have the time!

As always, thank you so much for reading! It means the world to me.